

# best practice guide for downloadable software in affiliate marketing

*Developed by the IAB Australia Affiliate & Partnership Marketing Working Group*

## Introduction

This guide has been developed to help affiliates and online publishers (“Affiliates”) make informed, ethical, and effective use of downloadable software in affiliate marketing. It outlines best practices for using such software to direct traffic to online merchants (“Advertisers”) through affiliate marketing programs operated by participating platforms.

“Downloadable software” refers to any downloadable software applications with the primary or secondary purpose of directing web traffic to Advertisers. This may include:

- > Software programs and applications
- > Plugins, add-ins, or browser extensions
- > Toolbars
- > Software widgets

Note: Stand-alone mobile apps are governed by third-party app store requirements and are not covered in this guide.

## Purpose of This Guide

- > To support a trusted, transparent environment for both consumers and advertisers.
- > To foster fair and ethical business practices in the use of downloadable software for affiliate marketing.

This guide offers practical recommendations. Following these suggestions can help Affiliates build long-term trust and deliver value to both users and advertisers.

## Best Practices for Affiliates Using Downloadable Software

### 1. Operate Legally and Ethically

- > Ensure all actions taken with downloadable software comply with applicable advertising standards and consumer protection and privacy laws.
- > Maintain internal processes to regularly assess and improve compliance with industry expectations.
- Strive to reflect the spirit of transparency and user respect in all activities.

### 2. Secure Informed User Consent

- > Always seek prior, explicit user consent before installing any software.
- > Clearly inform users about:
  - What is being installed
  - What personal data will be collected (if any)
  - How the software functions
  - How to uninstall or opt out
- > Ensure all terms of service are easy to understand and prominently displayed.

### 3. Design for Transparency and Ease of Use

- > Avoid bundling software with other programs unless clearly disclosed and consented to.
- > Make uninstallation straightforward with clear, user-friendly instructions.
- > Ensure the software functions reliably and in accordance with modern technical and ethical standards.
- > Avoid changing browser settings or modifying third-party websites without informed opt-in. Ensure the software is clearly identifiable and distinguishable from other components.

### 4. Respect User Autonomy

- > Do not incentivize users to download software with misleading or financial promises.
- > Avoid redirecting users or forcing actions without their clear agreement.
- > Clearly communicate any changes that will occur as a result of user interaction.
- > Do not open websites or redirect traffic without notifying the user in advance.
- > Do not overwrite or overlay Advertisers' or other affiliates' organic or paid search results.

### 5. Maintain Transparency with Advertisers

- > Do not incentivize users to download software with misleading or financial promises.
- > Avoid redirecting users or forcing actions without their clear agreement.
- > Clearly communicate any changes that will occur as a result of user interaction.
- > Do not open websites or redirect traffic without notifying the user in advance.
- > Do not overwrite or overlay Advertisers' or other affiliates' organic or paid search results.

## 6. Attribution and Responsible Use of Affiliate Links

- > Affiliate links, codes, or cookies must only be included when the downloadable software provides a clear, direct, and transparent benefit to the user that aligns with the extension's core functionality.
- > It is not acceptable to inject affiliate links without related user action or without delivering a tangible benefit to the user, such as a legitimate discount, cashback, points, or charitable donation.
- > The inclusion of affiliate links, codes, or cookies must always follow a user-initiated action and affirmative click. Extensions must not insert affiliate links in the background or without user awareness.
- > Downloadable software should not interfere with or override other affiliate activity and should stand down or be placed on soft-click attribution at discretion of Advertisers and platform providers.

## Conclusion

By following these best practices, Affiliates can enhance user trust, maintain healthy relationships with Advertisers, and contribute to a sustainable, high-performing affiliate marketing ecosystem. Acting transparently and ethically with downloadable software not only protects reputations—it also delivers stronger, longer-term performance outcomes.

These guidelines have been developed by the IAB Australia Affiliate and Partnership Working Group comprising representatives from Afterpay, Are Media, Commission Factory, Future, Impact, ND Agency, News Corp Australia, Nine, Partnerize, Rakuten and Skimlinks. Visit the IAB Australia website for more information on the [Affiliate and Partnership Working Group](#).